

"How to" diagram from the Internet

## Press Releases

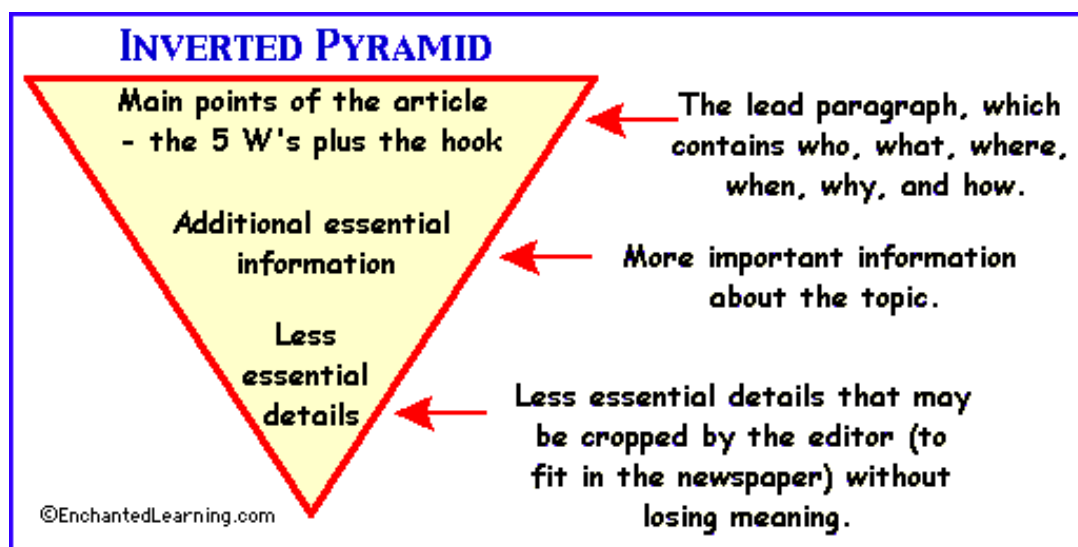
A press release (media release) is a pre-written story, given by an interested party to a journalist for the journalist to publish. These press releases nowadays go out by e-mail.

If you define it like that, then everything else about a press release will follow logically.

Everything is done in a way that is designed to save the journalist work, and time.

The press release must be short. It should not be longer than the space that the newspaper or radio programme will have available. This is because anything that is longer will have to be cut, and cutting down a text is work, that takes time. The journalists don't have any spare time.

The press release must be written in a style that is usable, or easily adjustable for use, in a newspaper or a radio bulletin. This means short sentences.



The press release should be on one topic only. For another topic, send another press release. If it is not possible to do this (e.g. after an executive meeting covering many topics), then the press release should be clearly divided up with sub-headings.

The press release must be immediately verifiable. This means that the journalist must be able to confirm, usually by telephone, that you are the source of the press release. If the journalist cannot do this, then the story will be dropped ("spiked") at once.

At the bottom of your press release you should put “Issued by:” and follow that with the organisation that is issuing the statement.

Immediately after that, you should put “Contact:” and follow it with your name and cell phone number. You can also put your land-line number and e-mail address, and all details including your physical whereabouts; but the cell number is the crucial one.

## **Logo and Date**

If you have a logo, use it at the top and centre. Under it, you can put the name of the organisation in text, even if it is clear in the logo. The reason is that your recipient’s system may strip off the logo and leave only text. Put the date there at the top, as well.

## **A Good “Subject” line**

Your message needs a good “Subject” line. This is not exactly like a newspaper headline, but it must tell the journalist plainly what the statement is about. It goes in the “Subject” field of the e-mail, and it goes above the text of the message. Shorter is better.

Some people like to make a quotation that the journalist can use, like, say: President Zuma said: “The National Development Plan will help us to work together.” The words in quotation marks are supposed to be the original words of the person, which the journalist can then use in the article. This point is

made in the graphic below. By the way, there is no shortage of advice on press releases on the Internet.

# Sample Press Release

Month Day, Year

## **Headlines are Meant to Summarize the Topic of the Release**

*Subheads can go into more detail, but make sure they don't take away from the impact of your headline*

CITY, State – The who, what, when, and where and why should all be included in one or two, to-the-point sentences. For example: Led by Joe Schmoe (City, State) and Jane Doe (City, State), the Boulder Barnstormers mounted a second half comeback against the Sarasota Fliers to win 15-14 and take home the Our City Classic title held at the Pleasantview Fields in “City”, “State” Saturday.

“A good way to get a point across without sounding like it’s an opinion is to have someone from the event or game that you are writing about give a quote that summarizes the point you are trying to get across,” said the Barnstormers Joe Schmoe. “After you mention the comeback, let Joe Schmoe tell it in his words to back you up. You add to the release by having a reliable source reiterate what you already wrote.”

The rest of the release should complement the beginning paragraphs. Put additional information, peripheral details and any tantalizing facts that make your release seem newsworthy.

Be sure to add local ties to the release that will make it more interesting. Even if you have a great team from another state in town for the tournament, your local media will still be more interested in the local players and teams participating.

Put your wrap-up paragraph at the end. If you didn’t already mention the next day’s match-ups or times, this is when you should do it. If it is a pre-event release this is a good place to recap what happened last year.

**For more information please contact “your name or whoever will be in charge of media”, at email@wherever.com - 555-555-5555 ph. – 555-555-5555 fax**

**For more information online please visit [www.tournament\\_or\\_organizationsite.com](http://www.tournament_or_organizationsite.com)**

**For more information on the sport of Ultimate, please visit [www.upa.org](http://www.upa.org)**

What is also possible to do, but is hardly ever done, is to record a quotation, or a portion of a speech, and attach it to your press release as a sound file. This will help with radio, especially.

But as a rule, don't use attachments when sending out press releases. Paste your text in the body of the message.

## **Press Releases as a news medium**

Where there is a reception for it, your press release can go, and it is better for you that your full original message is read by those you wish to reach, as opposed to the edited one with contradictory statements added, that the newspaper may actually print.

For this reason, in South Africa, it has become normal to send press releases out as widely as possible.

Press releases have the potential to by-pass the newspaper and broadcast media to a significant extent.

## **Distribution list**

E-mail distribution lists can be Google or Yahoo Groups, or they can be your own list-serve, but you need them to be sending e-mail, to addresses that are in use and not defunct.

E-mail that goes direct is what you want, and not a system that sends a message just to say there is a message. You want your message to appear in the in-box of your recipient, in such a way that the recipient can read the "Subject" line, and maybe the first few words of the message. You want it to be that if the journalist clicks once on the message, he or she will immediately get the message, open, in full.

Distribution lists require a lot of maintenance. You need to be adding subscribers all the time. This is a labour-intensive work. Therefore think twice before opening too many such lists.

On the other hand, get yourself on to as many as possible of other people's lists so as to read their media releases, contrast and compare them, and learn from how they do it.

## **Embargo?**

Most people don't bother with the "embargo" and "for immediate release" tags. Most of the time, they are superfluous. It is better to save "embargo" for the very occasional and rare times that it is really needed.

- The above is the third of three introductory texts that are compiled into a printable booklet, ["Writing, Editing and Press Releases"](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).